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News reporting on Pim Fortuyn: framing in two Dutch newspapers

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In the past, extreme right parties generally remained of minor significance in the Netherlands, at least when compared with other extreme right parties throughout Europe. One reason for the limited support they gained may have been the fact that these Dutch extreme right parties were extremely extreme: they tended to lean towards and have connections with neo-Nazi parties. Another reason may have been the continuous internal conflicts and schisms these parties suffered from and the lack of a charismatic leader.

Things changed with the appearance of Pim Fortuyn: a 53-year-old avowed homosexual and a former professor of sociology. Fortuyn was more moderate as well as charismatic. And Fortuyn struck oil somewhere in the alleged wastelands between the existing respectable right-leaning parties and the extreme right. In August 2001 he started his political career when he decided to accept an invitation to lead *Leefbaar Nederland* (Liveable Netherlands) into the 2002 national elections. Liveable Netherlands had been founded not long before and, from the beginning, the party was accused of extreme right sympathies and connections. The leadership was wary of these accusations and quite early on they screened the party and extremists were expelled. There were voices in the party arguing that Fortuyn's political ideas were too far right to represent the party, but, as he had never been a member of an extreme right-wing party, he was appointed anyway. Liveable Netherlands flourished in the polls. But Fortuyn turned out too far-right for the party's liking after all: in early February 2002 Fortuyn announced in an interview with *de Volkskrant* that, in his view, the country's anti-discrimination law should be abolished. He was expelled and a few days later he started his own party: *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF).

The new party flourished. Speculations about the causes of this success abounded. One of them was dissatisfaction of a sizeable part of the voters with the policies pursued during eight years of Paars (the Dutch centre right-socialist coalition government). Another, of course, had to do with Fortuyn's right-wing and populist politics,

especially regarding (non-Western) immigrants. Most likely, however, the success lay in a blend of these factors glued together by Fortuyn's flamboyant personality. He was the voice of his voters' dissatisfaction, and in a way he gave direction to their dissatisfaction. He did not actually tell people what to think: he merely told them what was wrong with the ideas of the existing parties, thus providing them with a rationale for their dissatisfaction, and he did so very eloquently. On 10 February 2002, in the municipal elections of Rotterdam (despite his break with Liveable Netherlands, Fortuyn was still leading its local Rotterdam branch) the new party Liveable Rotterdam scored an overwhelming 38 percent. After his huge victory in the Rotterdam local elections, Fortuyn was headed straight for what might have been an even bigger victory in the national elections. However, he was shot a few days before these elections.

In essence the LPF was a one-man party and during its rapid growth Fortuyn had problems filling up the ranks. Therefore, after his death the continuation of the party was not a foregone conclusion. Yet the LPF did not withdraw and in the elections of 15 March – just ten days after Fortuyn's death – it came in second, having won 17.3 percent of the votes. There is no way to determine whether this electoral success came about in spite of Fortuyn's death or whether his death was – at least partially – at the root of this spectacular result. During his campaign, Fortuyn had amassed a sizeable number of followers who had no intention of deserting their hero or his legacy. On the contrary, his death bolstered their admiration. Also, before his death Fortuyn had claimed that he was being 'demonized' by the (in his eyes largely leftist) press and by rival politicians. His death rekindled and lent support to these accusations, and for quite a number of voters Fortuyn's assassination was proof that there was something seriously wrong in Dutch politics and that it was time for a drastic change.

After the murder, the question whether Fortuyn had been demonized surfaced repeatedly. Official charges were brought (and withdrawn) by Fortuyn's lawyers against various politicians, columnists, newspapers and left-oriented websites. *Parool* editor Sinnema (2002) concluded that politicians were without a doubt jointly responsible for Fortuyn's death. She argued that politicians had portrayed Fortuyn as a Nazi, a fascist and a xenophobe, and then claimed that such allegations nourished a climate in which the murder of 'a would-be Hitler like him is actually not a crime. Instead, one is doing mankind a big favour.' Following Fortuyn's death, savage wordings such as the above suddenly disappeared and became cause for self-reflection by the journalistic profession. The present article is meant to be a scientific contribution to the process of self-reflection by the press in that it tries to shed some light on the question of whether Fortuyn was demonized, and if so in what way. It presents a quantitative content analysis of the online versions of the two most widely read newspapers in the Netherlands: the popular newspaper *De Telegraaf* (circulation 764,000) and the quality newspaper *de Volkskrant* (circulation 326,000). It will be argued that the degree of framing is an indicator of biased reporting and evidence for this position will be presented. We then present a framing analysis in which the degree of framing in articles about Pim Fortuyn is compared with the degree of framing in articles about the extreme right for three different periods. We are looking for similarities and differences in the treatment of Pim Fortuyn and the extreme right. Similarities will be considered an indicator of demonization.

Demonizing, objectivity and framing

Demonizing implies more than merely portraying a person as bad. It implies that this person is portrayed as bad over and beyond the objective facts given, and that the facts

have been imbued with the personal and a priori negative views of the communicator. Demonizing presupposes biased reporting as opposed to objective reporting. Of course, objective reporting is a controversial concept and in a sense it is impossible. An article or any other form of verbal account is at best some kind of map of the reality it represents. But a map is not reality itself: a map cannot represent every aspect of reality and by necessity it thus involves selection. In this sense, objective reporting is impossible. Such considerations have led some authors to abandon the concept of objectivity altogether (see Donsbach and Klett, 1993). However, Gauthier (1993) argues that the notion of objectivity should simply not be applied to the selective nature of reporting.

We agree with Gauthier in that, if non-selectivity is a requirement for objectivity, the only way to be objective is to remain silent. Anything that is said is a selection from what could have been said. Therefore, rather than using the notion of objectivity for *what* is being said – as in the selectivity discussion – it may be better to reserve the notion for *how* it is said.¹ Are the aspects of reality that are selected presented in a straightforward way or are they tainted by opinions or feelings (see for instance Merrill, 1996)? Matters are complicated, however, by the unfortunate fact that the *what* and the *how* of reporting are inextricably related: the selection of aspects of reality can easily and powerfully be used to promote the author's 'opinions and feelings' about a given topic.

The first step in answering the central question of this article is to assess the degree of bias in reporting about Pim Fortuyn. In our analysis the degree of framing in an article will be employed as an indicator of the degree of bias. Although bias and framing are not often connected in the literature, there are two elements that justify this procedure: the conceptual connection between the two concepts and the results of a recent study by Gan et al. (2005).

Conceptual connections between bias and framing

Objective reporting is concerned 'with the realities of the thing dealt with rather than the thoughts of the artist, writer, etc.' and with reporting 'without bias or prejudice' (Webster's *New World Dictionary*, 1990) or 'the portrayal of reality untainted by opinions or feelings' (Merrill, 1996). Objective reporting sticks to the facts. Framing, by contrast, generally refers to the way in which a specific interpretation of the facts is somehow 'smuggled' into a text. As such, framing constitutes bias, a deviation from objectivity. One of the most frequently quoted definitions of framing comes from Entman (1993: 52): 'To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.' A slightly different approach can be found in Capella and Jamieson (1997: 39): 'News frames are those rhetorical and stylistic choices ... that alter the interpretation of the topics treated.'

These two definitions reveal that there is some disagreement about the particular devices used to interpret the facts. This disagreement runs parallel to the *what* and *how* discussion in the literature about objectivity. On the one hand there are those – like Entman (1993) – who present the *selection of aspects* of reality (the *what*) as the main vehicle of framing. These authors often portray framing as a sort of second-level agenda-setting. Agenda-setting theory posits that *what* media write about influences the topics people talk and think about and what they consider important. If framing is defined in connection with agenda-setting it refers to the idea that media also determine

what aspects of those topics are focused on and are considered important. On the other hand there are authors – like Capella and Jamieson (1997) and Pan and Kosicky (1993) – who define framing in terms of *how* things are presented. An often cited illustration of this approach is a study by Kahneman and Tversky (1979), in which preference for a medicine is shown to depend on whether its effects are framed in terms of patients surviving or in terms of patients dying.

The conceptual connection between framing and bias is the main topic of a recent article by Entman (2007). Entman first proposes that both agenda-setting and second-level agenda-setting can be considered as aspects of framing. However, they serve different functions. Agenda-setting serves to define a problem, whereas second-level agenda-setting processes guide the causal interpretation, the moral evaluation and the treatment recommendation. Entman then goes on to define bias as 'consistent patterns in the framing of mediated communication', and he suggests that bias is the organizing concept behind agenda-setting and framing.

Empirical connections between objectivity and framing

Framing, then, consists of ways to introduce bias in an article in the sense that the mere facts are imbued with meaning and evaluation. The connection between framing and subjective reporting has hardly been investigated. In fact, to our knowledge there is only one article that empirically examines the two concepts: a study into the style of reporting about the United States presidential election of 2000 by Gan et al. (2005). The authors analyse articles from two newspapers: *Le Monde*, a French newspaper, and the *Straits Times* from Singapore. They state that due to 'Singapore's heavy-handed government, which exerts strong influence in various ways over the content of the newspapers, and is especially mindful of subjective content due to fear of inciting communal conflicts and political dissent' the *Straits Times* strongly favours objective reporting. *Le Monde*, by contrast, is a typical exponent of the French way of reporting and, as far as the journalistic ideal of objectivity is concerned, 'the French tend not to believe in it' (Gan et al., 2005: 447).

Gan et al. (2005) argue that, because of these differences in attitude towards objectivity, different news frames will be dominant for these two newspapers. Moreover, they hypothesize changes in framing of the 2000 US presidential election when a stalemate developed the day after the elections and the world had to wait more than a month before the votes in Florida had been properly counted and George Bush was declared the new president. Although Gan et al. cast their results in terms of differences in emphasis on the different frames (much as Entman [2007] talks about bias as patterns in framing) and changes in emphasis as a result of the deadlock, the gist of the results of their study is that the subjective reporting of *Le Monde* was characterized by approximately twice as much framing as the more objective reporting of the *Straits Times* and that framing approximately halved after the deadlock had developed. The *degree* of framing – or *the extent to which frames appear in stories*, as this concept is referred to by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) – therefore appears to be related to the objectivity of reporting. In this article we will investigate the connection between the *degree* of framing – rather than *patterns* of framing – and bias in reporting. One might object that framing is inevitable. However, although this is certainly true for framing as *selecting aspects* of reality (Entman, 1993), the argument does not seem to apply to framing as the introduction of specific elements in a text that alter the interpretation (Capella and Jamieson, 1997).

Types of news frames

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) distinguish two approaches to the analysis of frames: deductive and inductive. The inductive approach tries to trace the frames that characterize a particular news story with an open mind: no answers are precluded. The deductive approach analyses to what degree pre-determined frames are present in news stories. The deductive approach is more quantitative and therefore it is more appropriate – and certainly more convenient – for the analysis of a larger body of articles. Gan et al. (2005) use this method of *generic* frames, as they are called, and so does the present article.

We employed the set of frames that Valkenburg et al. (1999) and Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) identified as the most commonly used frames. The *conflict frame* emphasizes a conflict between individuals, groups or institutions. The *human-interest frame* exposes the human, emotional angle in the presentation of an event, issue or problem. The news becomes personalized, dramatized and emotional. The *responsibility frame* presents a subject or problem in a way that places the responsibility for its cause or solution with the government, an individual or a group. In the *morality frame*, an event, problem or issue is approached from a religious or moral point of view. Finally, the economic consequences frame indicates what the economic outcome will be of an event, subject or problem. Only the conflict frame and the human-interest frame coincide with the frames used by Gan et al. (2005), since our analysis took place before the publication of their article.

The generic frames described above seem to stress the *what* of framing (i.e. the selectivity of reporting) rather than the *how*. As mentioned before, *what*-framing is inevitable. Therefore it is not a very convincing illustration of biased or subjective reporting unless the particular selection involved also influences the interpretations that are derived from a text. Generic frames seem to do so to a different degree. The regional frame employed by Gan et al. (2005) seems to be an example of pure *what*-framing without affecting the interpretation of a text. Not surprisingly, this is the one frame in Gan et al. that does not occur more frequently in the more subjective reporting of *Le Monde*. Similarly, the economic consequences frame in the present study is a less convincing case of a frame that influences the interpretations of an article. Therefore, we expect the economic consequences frame to be a poor correlate of biased reporting.

Hypotheses and research questions

The purpose of the present study is twofold. As a preliminary to the analysis of reporting on Pim Fortuyn, we want to look into the idea that the degree of framing is an indicator of biased reporting. Inasmuch as it is, the degree of framing should be related to a number of variables. More objective reporting may be expected in fact-driven, straight news articles as opposed to background articles that provide analyses and commentaries. When the writer is a professional reporter as opposed to other sources (e.g. letters to the editor), one may expect – at least in the Netherlands – more objective reporting (McQuail, 2005). Predictions for differences between the two newspapers are less clear-cut. *De Volkskrant* is considered to be more of a quality paper and therefore may be expected to be more objective and to show less framing than *De Telegraaf*. More important, however, subjective or biased reporting may be expected when the distance between the position of the author of an article and the topic

commented upon is large, especially when these topics are located in the author's so-called *latitude of rejection* (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). Therefore, more biased reporting is expected in the left-oriented *de Volkskrant* than in *De Telegraaf*, when they report on the far right and on Fortuyn, whose ideas they consider to be on the far right. More biased reporting can also be expected in articles about the far right than in articles about Fortuyn, as Fortuyn is generally considered less extreme than the far right. Finally, in line with the findings of Gan et al., biased reporting and hence framing of Fortuyn and his ideas are expected to diminish drastically after his assassination. It's just not done to kick a man when he is down.

Summarizing, in articles on Fortuyn and for articles on the extreme right we expect, irrespective of the type of frame:

H1: more framing in *de Volkskrant*;

H2: more framing in articles from sources other than journalists;

H3: more framing in background articles;

H4: more framing in articles about the extreme right than in articles about Fortuyn.

In articles on Fortuyn alone we expect:

H5: a steep fall in the degree of framing after the murder.

It should be remembered that the pursuit of these hypotheses is not a goal in itself. The hypotheses are intended to explore the idea that framing and bias are connected. We do not consider confirmation of the hypotheses as proof of this idea. We do consider confirmation as a sufficient reason to take the analysis one step further. Therefore, to the degree that the hypotheses are confirmed and that framing appears to be an index of subjective or biased reporting, we want to employ this measure of bias to investigate the nature of reporting on Pim Fortuyn. We will compare the degree of framing in articles about Fortuyn with that in articles about the extreme right, and will explore the evolution of both over the course of time and for two newspapers voicing different political views. We will interpret similarity in the degree of framing of Fortuyn and the extreme right, and similarity in the patterns of framing over the course of time, as evidence that Fortuyn is treated in the same way as the extreme right and that he has indeed been 'demonized'.

Method

Articles about Pim Fortuyn and about the extreme right in the online editions of *de Volkskrant* and *De Telegraaf* from 1 January 2001 until the Lower House elections of 16 May 2002 were selected using a number of key words (Pim Fortuyn, extreme right, racism, xenophobia, Haider, Le Pen, Flemish Block). This resulted in a total of 961 articles. Articles of less than 20 lines (approximately seven sentences) were excluded, as these very short articles generally simply report a fact, leaving little room for interpretation. This left 521 articles. For practical reasons a random sample of 50 percent of *de Volkskrant* and 50 percent of *De Telegraaf* was selected for analysis, which resulted in a total of 251 articles (160 from *de Volkskrant*, 91 from *De Telegraaf*). Articles constituted the unit of analysis. The period of the investigation was divided into three parts, according to the following series of events:

Part One: 1 January 2001 until 6 March 2002. These two months are situated relatively early in the political career of Fortuyn: his last month as the leader of Liveable Netherlands and his first month as the political head of his own party, the LPF.

Part Two: 7 March 2002 until the assassination. This period involves his stunning rise in the polls and the reluctant acknowledgement (by both politicians and media) of Fortuyn as a serious political force.

Part Three: 6 May 2002 until the Lower House elections on 16 May 2002. This period involves Fortuyn's funeral, the arrest of his murderer and speculations about the murderer's mysterious motives.

For the framing analyses an instrument previously used by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) was selected. The instrument consists of 20 propositions, each relating to one of the five news frames defined above. For example the human-interest proposition: 'The article adds a personal example or a personal point of view to the topic.' Inter-coder reliabilities (intra-class correlations based on a sample of 10 percent of the articles) ranged from slightly substandard to acceptable: 0.64 for the human interest frame; 0.74 for the conflict frame; 0.77 for the morality frame; and 0.80 for the responsibility frame. However, the reliability of the economic consequences frame was only 0.24. Therefore – and because this frame was hardly present in the articles analysed – the economic consequences frame was discarded for further analyses.

Results

No articles were found focusing on both Pim Fortuyn and on the extreme right. Therefore, similarities in framing between Fortuyn and the extreme right cannot be due to a (partial) overlap in the articles analysed. *De Telegraaf* seemed to be less interested than *de Volkskrant* in both Fortuyn (72 articles in *De Telegraaf* against 106 in *de Volkskrant*) and the extreme right (19 articles in *De Telegraaf* against 54 in *de Volkskrant*), which suggests that these topics were more important to *de Volkskrant*. Further analysis shows that the difference in the number of articles devoted to Pim Fortuyn (and to a lesser degree the difference in the number of articles on the extreme right) in both newspapers is largely due to the number of background articles dealing with these issues. The number of news articles is approximately the same in the two newspapers.

The news frames

A principal component analysis was carried out in order to assess the presence of the five above-mentioned generic news frames in the research material. After varimax rotation, the solution of the factor analysis turned out to be almost identical to that of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). However, an item about visual information contributing to the human-interest frame was removed, as such visual information proved to be virtually absent. A second item received a low factor loading (0.22) but was not removed in order to follow the solution of Semetko and Valkenburg as closely as possible. All other items produced factor loadings exceeding 0.47 and averaging 0.71. In order to enhance the interpretability of the data, it was decided to report the average item scores rather than factor scores for the frames. These average item scores reflect

TABLE 1
Mean scores for types of framing in articles on Fortuyn and the extreme right

		Human interest	Responsibility	Conflict	Morality	Average framing
H1: Newspaper	F:	30.1***	15.1***	14.1***	26.0***	58.4***
<i>De Telegraaf</i> (91)		0.51	0.64	0.78	0.11	0.51
<i>de Volkskrant</i> (160)		1.25	1.09	1.30	0.62	1.06
H2: Author	F:	1.9	7.2**	1.5	23.8***	14.3***
Journalist (191)		0.94	0.83	1.05	0.30	0.78
Other (57)		1.12	1.18	1.25	0.85	1.10
H3: Article type	F:	41.7***	10.5***	.4	12.2***	29.8***
News article (138)		0.55	0.77	1.07	0.28	0.67
Background (113)		1.50	1.11	1.16	0.62	1.10
H4: Topic	F:	2.0	12.7***	.9	6.2*	10.2**
Fortuyn (178)		0.94	0.80	1.07	0.36	0.79
Extreme right (73)		1.08	1.24	1.21	0.62	1.04
H5: Period^a	F:	1.7	40.7***	19.4***	1.7	21.3***
Before (113)		1.00	1.08	1.32	0.30	0.92
After (65)		0.85	0.31	0.64	0.45	0.56

Scores range from 0 (not present) to 4 (clearly present). Numbers in parentheses = *n*.

*** $p < .001$ one-sided; ** $p < .01$ one-sided; * $p < .05$ one-sided.

a Includes only articles about Fortuyn.

the original scores attributed to the items, ranging from 0 (frame not at all present) to 4 (frame clearly present in the article). Correlations between these average item scores and the factor scores were very high, ranging from 0.86 to 0.99.

Preliminary analyses

We intend to employ the degree of framing in the articles about Pim Fortuyn as an indicator of bias. As framing analysis has never been used in this way before, it seems appropriate to verify whether the 'behaviour' of these bias indices coincides with what common sense dictates. In the previous sections a number of hypotheses were developed about this 'behaviour' in relation to a number of variables. Table 1 shows the results.

Framing, or the angle that is chosen to tell a story, should ideally be independent of the length of an article. However, in our operationalization each frame is measured by the presence or absence of a number of article features. The longer the articles are, the greater the chance that these features occur and therefore it is possible that the degree of framing is related to the length of an article. T-tests show that longer articles were indeed characterized by more framing (except for the morality frame), although this was only significant for the human-interest frame and the average degree of framing. As article length is often related to other variables (e.g. background articles are significantly longer – $t = 5.1$, d.f. = 249, $p < .001$ – than fact-driven news articles), article length was held constant for the analyses presented in Table 1.²

As mentioned above, the degree of framing will be seen as an indicator of bias in the articles. Inasmuch as this assumption is correct, (H3) news articles should be characterized by less framing than background articles, and (H2) articles written by professional journalists by less framing than items such as columns and letters from the readers. Table 1 confirms these corollaries, although the difference between journalists and other writers is not significant for the human-interest frame and the conflict frame, and the difference between news articles and background articles is not significant for the conflict frame. Predictions for the difference between the two newspapers were based on the fact that on a left-right scale *de Volkskrant* is further away from the politics of Pim Fortuyn (and the extreme right) than *De Telegraaf*, and on the idea that reporting is likely to be less objective when topics are involved that are further away from one's own position, especially when these topics are located in the *latitude of rejection* (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981). Indeed, overall and for each frame, the degree of framing is significantly higher in *de Volkskrant* than in *De Telegraaf* (H1). This, of course, may be due to the fact that *de Volkskrant* carries more background articles. However, when article type is added as a covariate the differences between the two newspapers remain very significant (all $p < .001$). As the political stance of the newspapers may be expected to be further away from the extreme right than from Fortuyn, framing should be more intense when the extreme right is being discussed (H4). Table 1 shows this to be true, although not significantly for the frames of human interest and conflict. Finally, parallel to the decrease in framing that was found by Gan et al. (2005), the degree of framing is expected to drop sharply after Fortuyn's assassination (H5). Table 1 shows the degree of framing before (i.e. periods 1 and 2) and after Fortuyn's death (period 3). Except for morality and human-interest, all frames show a significant drop.

These results are consistent with the idea that the degree of framing in newspaper articles is an indicator of lack of objectivity. Types of articles that are supposed to be more objective show less framing; reporting about topics that are further removed from one's own position shows more framing, and a dramatic development in events leads to an overall decline in framing. To be sure, all of the above does not mean that news framing and lack of objectivity are identical. It does suggest, however, that these constructs are related. It also shows that a further analysis of the relationship between reporting about Fortuyn and the extreme right on the one hand, and the degree of framing on the other, might certainly be worth the effort.

Framing of Pim Fortuyn and the extreme right

The main research question addressed in this article is whether the newspapers in the Netherlands 'demonized' Pim Fortuyn, thereby possibly contributing to the climate in which he was assassinated. The previous section shows that the degree of framing is meaningfully related to the objectivity of reporting. However, the data in Table 1 mask a number of important developments, since the underlying patterns across the three periods are different when it comes to Fortuyn and the extreme right, and, moreover, different for *de Volkskrant* and *De Telegraaf*.

Figure 1 shows the average degree of framing for the two papers and topics in the three periods under investigation. The differences between *de Volkskrant* and *De Telegraaf* prove to be largest in the first period. Although Fortuyn had only just entered the Dutch political scene, he had already managed to cause a heated public debate. On the one hand, he was adored by a growing part of the Dutch voters who felt that in Fortuyn they had finally found their champion, since he articulated the

Figure 1
Presence of framing in articles about Fortuyn and the extreme right in two newspapers and for three different periods on a scale from 0 (not at all present) to 4 (clearly present)

opinions they themselves were afraid to express in the political climate of the time. On the other hand, he antagonized large parts of the press and the established political parties due to his radical stances on a number of issues, especially on immigration and on Islam. As mentioned before, he even succeeded in antagonizing his own (right-wing) party Liveable Netherlands and was expelled due to his extremist statements in an interview with *de Volkskrant*, in which, among other things, he called Islam a backward religion.

The left-oriented *de Volkskrant* reacted violently to the rise of Fortuyn and its coverage of Fortuyn was characterized by heavy framing. In contrast, the right-oriented *De Telegraaf* was not particularly aroused by the events and its articles about Fortuyn barely showed any framing at all ($t = 4.2$; d.f. = 22, $p < .001$, 1-sided). A further point of interest is that, in both newspapers, the degree of framing of the extreme right was about the same as that of Fortuyn. In the left-oriented *de Volkskrant* the degree of framing of the extreme right was understandably somewhat higher than the degree of framing of Fortuyn, but the differences were not significant.

The second period was characterized by a steady rise in the polls for the national elections. Fortuyn was no longer just a nuisance and a potential threat but had become a force to be reckoned with. By the end of the second period he was even invited to the pre-election television debates between the leaders of the five largest parties. The leaders of the old parties hoped to turn the tables in the debate, but they were no match for Fortuyn. One of the political leaders even resigned as a consequence of his poor performance in the debate.

De Volkskrant and *De Telegraaf* reacted very differently to this new situation: *de Volkskrant* backed off a bit and neutralized its initial negative response ($t = 2.0$; d.f. = 72,

$p = .046$, 2-sided), whereas *De Telegraaf* left its initially detached and disinterested position and increased the degree of framing in its articles about Fortuyn ($t = 2.4$; d.f. = 37, $p = .021$, 2-sided). Consequently, the difference in the degree of framing between the two newspapers became much smaller, although it is still significant ($t = 2.4$; d.f. = 87, $p = .009$, 1-sided). In all, as the threat of Fortuyn as a new political force became more real, the degree of framing in these left- and right-oriented newspapers converged, suggesting that the degree of framing became moderated by the 'reality principle'. In the second period, the degree of framing of the extreme right in *De Telegraaf* was approximately the same as in the first period. However, in *de Volkskrant* the degree of framing of the extreme right diminished to the same extent that it diminished in articles about Fortuyn. Apparently, framing of the extreme right in *de Volkskrant* was influenced by the same events that shaped the degree of framing in coverage about Fortuyn.

The third period covers the ten days starting with Fortuyn's assassination³ on 6 May until the national elections on 15 May 2002. His followers were stunned: thousands of people queued up to sign the condolence register, thousands put flowers in his front garden and thousands paid their last respects as the funeral cortege passed on its way to the graveyard. The accusation that the left – i.e. parts of the press and the political parties – had demonized Fortuyn had been made before, but now re-emerged in full force. According to the chairman of the LPF (the party that had expelled Fortuyn three months before): 'The bullet came from the left.' Obviously, these were not circumstances in which continued criticism and negative comments on Fortuyn and his political stance would have been received favourably. In line with this, and parallel with the results of Gan et al. (2005) about the effects of disruptive events on the degree of framing, framing almost disappeared after the assassination, in both *de Volkskrant* (compared with period 2: $t = 2.7$; d.f. = 92, $p = .004$: 1-sided) and *De Telegraaf* (compared with period 2: $t = 3.1$; d.f. = 58, $p = .002$: 1-sided). The degree of framing in *de Volkskrant*, however, was still significantly higher ($t = 2.7$; d.f. = 63, $p = .005$: 1-sided) than in *De Telegraaf*.

No articles are found about the extreme right in *De Telegraaf* during the third period. However, in *de Volkskrant* the degree of framing of the extreme right again follows that of Fortuyn. Taking the three periods together, temporal changes in the degree of framing of Fortuyn in *de Volkskrant* are closely followed by changes in the degree of framing of the extreme right. In fact, there are no significant differences between the degree of framing of Fortuyn and the extreme right in *de Volkskrant* for the individual periods.⁴ Obviously, changes in the degree of framing of Fortuyn were related to his rise in the polls, his electoral success in Rotterdam and his death. However, it is not at all clear why these events should have an equal effect on the degree of framing of the extreme right – unless, of course, *de Volkskrant* did not differentiate between Fortuyn and the extreme right, or to put it differently, unless the paper treated Fortuyn in the same way as the extreme right and the extreme right in the same way as Fortuyn. From this perspective Fortuyn was demonized by *de Volkskrant*.

One last remark. Figure 1 shows the patterns in the degree of framing of Fortuyn and the extreme right for the average score of the four frames employed. A separate analysis of each of these frames indicates that the conflict frame, the responsibility frame and the human-interest frame closely follow this general pattern. The morality frame, by contrast, follows a different path. After Fortuyn's death, the degree of framing in terms of morality increased both in *De Telegraaf* (n.s.) and in *de Volkskrant* (n.s.). A possible reason is that at this point the coverage no longer dealt with the moral aspects of Fortuyn and his political views but with the moral aspects of his assassination.

Conclusions and discussion

The main purpose of this article was to investigate if and to what degree Pim Fortuyn was demonized by two leading papers in the Netherlands. To that end articles were analysed about Fortuyn (and the extreme right) in *de Volkskrant* and *De Telegraaf* from the start of Fortuyn's political career in January 2002 to the national elections shortly after his assassination at the beginning of May. In order to get a grip on the abstract concept of demonization we suggested that the concept implies subjective reporting, and we argued that subjective reporting is both conceptually and empirically related to the degree of framing.

Before applying the concept of framing to the question of whether or not, and to what degree, Fortuyn was demonized by *de Volkskrant* and *De Telegraaf*, a number of corollaries were derived from the assumption that biased reporting and framing are related. These corollaries constituted the hypotheses that were tested in the preliminary part of the investigation. By and large these hypotheses were confirmed. The degree of framing was higher when the distance between paper and subject was larger: it was higher for the left-leaning *de Volkskrant* than for the right-leaning *De Telegraaf*, and it was higher for the extreme right than for Fortuyn. Framing was also lower for news articles than for background articles, and lower for articles from journalists than articles from other sources. And, supporting a hypothesis that was derived from Gan et al. (2005), framing all but disappeared after Fortuyn's death. The pattern revealed by the framing index suggests that it can be used as a measure for subjective or biased reporting. Therefore, the analyses of reporting on Pim Fortuyn in *de Volkskrant* and *De Telegraaf* were continued, using the amount of framing as an indicator of subjective or biased reporting.

Very different patterns emerge for the two newspapers. In the first period the degree of framing in articles about Fortuyn was much higher for *de Volkskrant* than for *De Telegraaf*. In the second period there was a significant decrease in framing for *de Volkskrant* and a significant increase for *De Telegraaf*. These changes were interpreted as a gradual recognition that Fortuyn was becoming a force to be reckoned with, in other words, as an adaptation to the demands of reality. For *de Volkskrant* this adaptation implied tuning down a bit. For *De Telegraaf* this meant a departure from its initially detached style of reporting. In the third period both papers showed a significant decrease in framing as a reaction to the shocking event of Fortuyn's death. For *De Telegraaf* framing was relatively low in all periods and not related to the degree of framing of the extreme right. For *de Volkskrant* the degree of framing was much higher; moreover, differences in framing over the periods under investigation between *de Volkskrant* and the extreme right were not significant; the degree of framing of Fortuyn and the extreme right closely followed the same pattern. Apparently, the events that affected reporting about Fortuyn, viz. his rise in the polls and his sudden death, also had an impact on reporting about the extreme right. This suggests that *de Volkskrant* did not differentiate between Fortuyn and the extreme right: in other words, for *de Volkskrant* Fortuyn was the extreme right. He was categorized and treated as an extreme right-wing politician. For the Dutch such a categorization does not simply describe a right-wing political stance: it suggests an association with Nazis and with fascism. In this sense it may be concluded that *de Volkskrant* demonized Pim Fortuyn.

Notes

1. Likewise, D'Alessio and Allen (2000) distinguish three kinds of bias, two of which are concerned with *what* is reported about (gatekeeping bias and coverage bias) and one with *how* things are reported (statement bias).
2. Univariate analyses of variance with article length as a covariate have been performed.
3. The murderer was caught within the hour but to this day his exact motivations remain unclear. However, from the beginning these motivations did not seem to be ethnic in nature.
4. There was a significant difference for all three periods together; however, this difference was due to an unequal distribution of the number of articles on Fortuyn and the extreme right in *de Volkskrant* in the three periods.

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